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Elder Companion: Lesson 9—Getting a Job[1]

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Introduction

The Elder Companion training program is designed to train persons interested in becoming employed by local service providers as sitter/companions for the elderly. The objective of the program is to help participants develop the necessary skills to provide high-quality care including assistance with daily living activities (DLAs), home management services and companionship for the elderly adult.

This training course is preparatory to studying to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA).

For an overview of the training course, see FCS5246.

In the Elder Companion training program, the following topics are addressed:

- Lesson 1 Roles and Responsibilities
- Lesson 2 Aging
- Lesson 3 Communication
- Lesson 4 Nutrition
- Lesson 5 Home Maintenance and Safety
- Lesson 6 Stress Management
- Lesson 7 Time Management
- Lesson 8 Leisure Activities
- Lesson 9 Getting a Job

In addition to the nine topics that are taught as Lessons 1 through 9 in a classroom setting, training program participants will be required to make a field observation at an elder care facility. An Agent's guide and observation form are provided in Attachment 1. (See training course overview FCS5246.)

Agent's Teaching Guide: Getting a Job

Part 1: Things I Like About Me

Part 2: What Do Employers Look For?

Part 3: Job Search

Part 4: Resume Writing

Part 5: The Application

Part 6: Preparing for a Job Interview

Part 7: The Job Interview

Part 8: The Importance of a Contract After You Are Hired

Time: 3 to 4 Hours

Instructor: County faculty and/or local employment agency personnel

Equipment/Supplies: PC/laptop (or alternative method to display slides), pencils, flip chart, chart paper, markers, masking tape, samples of resumes, PowerPoint slides created from Handouts C, D, I and J

Handouts:

Part 1

Handout A: Things I Like About Me

Part 2

Handout B: Top 20 Positive Characteristics Employers Look For

Part 3

- Handout C: Want Ads
- Handout D: Other Job Seeking Resources

Part 4

- Handout E: My Practice Resume

Part 5

- Handout F: Employment Application

Part 6

- Handout G: As an Employee, What Do You Have to Offer?

Part 7

- Handout H: Interview Questions You Might Be Asked
- Handout I: Questions You Can Ask at a Job Interview
- Handout J: Questions Not to Ask at a Job Interview

• Handout K: Job Interview Evaluation Score Sheet

Part 8

• Handout L: Sample Contract for the Elder Companion

Objectives (Expected Outcomes):

Participants will be able to

• Identify their strengths as an employee.
• Prepare a resume to assist in completing an employment application.
• Successfully complete a job interview.

Part 1: Things I Like About Me: Lesson Plan

Introduction

In the process of finding a job, you must recognize your good qualities and sell yourself to an employer.

DO:

• Have the participants divide into groups of two. Give each person a copy of *Things I Like About Me* (Handout A). and ask them to write down four or five things they really like about themselves. (Since most people tend to be overly modest and hesitant to write something nice about themselves, the instructor may need to encourage participants. The instructor may "spontaneously" show their list using adjectives such as honest, serious, happy, etc.)
• After four or five minutes have passed, ask each person to share with their partner the items they wrote down.

REFLECT:

• Did you feel uncomfortable with this activity? If so why? **We've been taught not to brag about ourselves, even if it is the truth.**
• Were you honest or did you "hold back" your positive qualities? What reaction did you get from your partner?

APPLY:

• How could the characteristics you listed be helpful to you in getting and keeping a job?

Handout A: Things I Like About Me

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Part 2: What Do Employers Look For? Lesson Plan

Introduction

Employers have been polled about the characteristics they value in new employees. We are going to see if you agree.

DO:

• Divide participants into groups of four to five people. Have each group select a person to act as a recorder.
• Have each participant complete the *Top 20 Positive Characteristic Employers Look For worksheet* (Handout B). Afterwards each person should describe their list of characteristics to the small group and why they chose these characteristics. The recorder should write down on chart paper the characteristics the group's members shared with the group. One person may share the results with the larger group.

REFLECT:

• The instructor should introduce the following questions and encourage either small or large group discussion:
• Which characteristics were strongest or highest rated among your group members?
• Which characteristics were most frequently mentioned?
• Will different employers emphasize different characteristics?

APPLY:

• Which of these characteristics do you already possess?
• How many were on your list of "Things I Like About Myself"?
• How can you develop these characteristics?

Handout B: Top 20 Positive Characteristics Employers Look For

1. Ability to get things done
2. Self-starter
3. Honesty and integrity
4. Dependability
5. Common sense
6. Oral communication skills
7. Interpersonal skills
8. Motivation to achieve
9. Reliability
10. Judgment skills
11. Flexibility
12. Education
13. Decision-making skills
14. Intelligence
15. Works hard
16. Personality
17. Developed work habits
18. Career and work goals
19. Innovative ideas
20. Written communication skills

My Top 10 Characteristics:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Part 3: Job Search: Lesson Plan

Introduction

We are going to start looking at potential jobs as sitters/companions and what the requirements will be.

DO:

- Have participants study Handout C, *Sample Want Ads*, taken from the Florida Job Listing. (You may want to make a slide of this handout or use your local newspaper or a job board.)
- Have participants circle jobs that they would like to apply for. Discuss their choices.

REFLECT:

- Why did you select the jobs you did?
- What requirements are necessary for these jobs?
- Do you have the skills to apply for these jobs? Why or why not?
- What about transportation?
- What about experience?

DO:

- Distribute Handout D, *Other Job Seeking Resources*. Show transparency created from the handout and discuss with the class.

REFLECT:

- Do you think it is important to use resources other than “Want Ads” for job seeking?
- How many contacts do you think you might have in your “network"?

APPLY:

- Invite local employer of companions/sitters to discuss employment processes as well as job skills in demand locally.

Handout C: Want Ads

General Help Wanted

Employer seeking companion to provide care for elderly, disabled or convalescent person's personal needs. Prepare and accompany to social events, prepare and serve meals. Pay DOE. Full-time and part-time positions available.

COMPANION/HOUSEKEEPER needed for 26-year-old female. Must live in Winter Haven area and have transportation. Yearly salary -$7,800. Call for an appointment.

Caring individual needed to assist elderly female during evening hours with personal needs. Sleepovers are required. References required; background check will be performed. Call for an appointment. 555-2030

WEEKEND WORK Companion/Care giver needed for 93-year-old male. Twelve-hour shifts on Sat & Sun. Experience preferred, not mandatory. $6.50/hour. To apply, call Joe @555-5487

Seeking patient HIGH SCHOOL graduates to support/assist adults w/developmental disabilities in the community. Pay starts at $6.50, DOE. Must be flexible evening/weekend. Call first for an appointment.

HOMEMAKERS needed in CLEARWATER area. Cleaning exp. and current FL driver's license a must. You will manage and maintain assigned client homes. Salary starts at $13,520/year. Please call for appointment or fax resume. 555-9901

JACKSONVILLE NEEDS HOMEMAKERS. Exp. preferred. Will use vacuum, washing machine, etc. Some on-site training through Arcadia. Must lift 10-20 lbs often. Drug screen, physical, background and reference check REQ. Hrs. to be arranged. Pay DOE. Please stop in for application.

Earn $80-90 per day. Live in Help needed. Must be able to lift 50 lbs. Cooking, cleaning, personal care are some duties. Background check-abuse registry. Physical-TB test required. Applicants pay $21 for background ck. Fax resume to 555-6565

Homemaker/Family Supp. Position req min 1 yr exp with children, HIGH SCHOOL diploma, valid FL license. Will use self-provided vehicle to make home visits & provide assistance to families in need of counseling, homemaking skills, etc. Salary starts at $15,000. Please contact Mary @ 555-0202.

Handout D: Other Job-Seeking Resources

Don't limit yourself to the Help Wanted ads. There are other resources available for job seeking:

- Employment Agencies (particularly the state employment agency, which is a free service and a part of the state unemployment compensation agency).
- Temporary Employment Agencies (sometimes temporary jobs can lead to full time employment).

Perhaps one of the best ways to seek employment is through networking. Networks can include

- **Personal—**your friends, family, current or former coworkers, your doctor, dentist, insurance agent, pastor, and others that you interact with and who have some knowledge of who you are and your capabilities.
- **Organizational—**organized groups that you either belong to or have some association with. These groups might include professional associations, trade unions, fraternities or sororities, clubs, and civic groups like Kiwanis or Elks.
- **Community—**local businesses, places of worship, or volunteer agencies like Big Brothers/Sisters.

Source: Elizabeth B. Bolton, JobStart Series, Part 3: Marketing Yourself (https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FY347).

Part 4: Resume Writing: Lesson Plan

Introduction

"Packaging Your Talents, Skills and Abilities" for an employer is known as a resume. A resume is a summary of the most important information that an employer would like to know about you. It's your opportunity to "market" yourself and the skills and abilities that you have. A resume is an important job tool to have. Today's activity will help you discover some of your hidden talents and skills to market yourself to future employers.

DO:

PACKAGING YOU!

- Create a list of resume categories on chart paper. Tell participants that a resume is a written record of information about a job applicant, including his or her name, address, education, job experience, honors or awards, and hobbies, interests, or special accomplishments.
- Explain that a resume is usually sent or given to an employer for whom you would like to work; its purpose is to tell the employer enough about yourself that the employer will agree to interview you.
- Ask if anyone has prepared a resume. Point out that it is an important tool one should have before beginning a job search.

- Display several examples of different resumes on a bulletin board or table and have the participants look them over. Before distributing *My Practice Resume* worksheet (Handout E) to the group, ask them to comment on the sample resumes you have displayed and point out the following significant characteristics:
  - Accurate and complete.
  - Neatness; typed if possible.
  - Correct language, spelling and punctuation.
  - Attractive, eye-catching layout.
  - Prominent placement of name and address.
  - Clear categories of information.
  - One or two pages in length.
- There is some information that you do not have to put in your resume.
- Whether you are male or female.
- Age, birth date, attendance dates at high school.
- Race, color, ethnic background.
- Physical handicaps or disabilities.
- Distribute Handout E, *My Practice Resume*, to each participant and allow about 30 minutes for them to complete a "practice" copy with your assistance. Let them know they will need to keep their practice resume in their notebooks to refer to when they complete an activity employment application later on in today's lesson.
- Have participants share their resume with another person and ask for suggestions.

REFLECT:

- How does it feel to have your own resume?
- Will the way a resume looks make a difference to an employer?
- When does a person change his or her resume? Why?
- Where can you get copies of your resume made? A folder to carry it in?

APPLY:

- Finish your resume and get it typed.

Handout E: My Practice Resume

Complete the worksheet below as a practice exercise in writing a resume.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name

_____

Address

_____

Birthplace _____Birth date_____

EDUCATION:

See Handout E/Table 1.

JOB-RELATED EXPERIENCE:

Give date, company and position or activity and role; start with current or most recent position. See Handout E/Table 2.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE: Things you have done for other people or for your community, such as volunteering at a hospital, nursing home or place of worship.

_____

ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES: Such as sewing, mechanics, sports, cooking, church.

_____

AWARDS AND HONORS:

_____

REFERENCES:

See Handout E/Table 3.

People who know you and who would be willing to provide information about you to an employer. These could be current or past employers, minister or rabbi, etc. But **not** family members.

Part 5: The Application: Lesson Plan

Introduction

Application forms may look a little scary, but they are not so bad when you know how to answer the questions. It is much easier when you have the right information available. The resume you completed will help you to remember the information. Today's activities will help you plan and prepare for completing job applications.

DO:

- Distribute Handout F, *Employment Application* worksheet. Ask participants to complete it in ink, using their own practice resumes as guides. Allow about 15 minutes. When everyone in the group has finished, divide them into pairs.
- Ask the members of each pair to exchange application forms and "critique" each other's, keeping the following questions in mind. Write these questions on chart paper:
  - Is it neat? Are there any ink smudges?
  - Is it legible? Can it be read easily?
  - Is it complete or are there blank spaces?
  - If there are items that do not apply, did the applicant write "N/A" or "not applicable?"
- Allow 15 minutes for pairs to work and then bring the group together again. Answer any questions participants may have about application forms and discuss the points below.

REFLECT:

- Why is it helpful to have a resume before you complete an application form? A resume helps you remember important information like dates, names and addresses.
- Which parts of the application form are the most difficult to complete? Were there terms and words that were new to you? Will you be more knowledgeable and confident about completing a job application in the future?
- Without a lot of work experience, how can a resume help you? It provides an opportunity to present your skills and abilities in a written form to a future employer. In many cases, application forms don't provide this opportunity.

APPLY:

- Give a second copy of the Employment Application to each participant and have them complete it.

Handout F: Employment Application

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, marital status or disability.

If you require special accommodation because of a disability to participate in the application/selection process, you must notify the hiring authority in advance.

APPLICATION INFORMATION (Please type or print in ink)

Last Name_____

First Name_____

M.I._____

Street Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Cell or Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____

EDUCATION:

Name/Address of School _____

Graduate? (Y)____ (N)____

Date Graduated _____

Your name while attending school if different from the application:

COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Name of School/Location/Dates of Attendance/Major/Minor Course of Study/Degree

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 6: Preparing for a Job Interview: Lesson Plan

Introduction

Why do you think being prepared for a job interview is important? (Allow time for discussion.) To start preparation for a job interview, first become familiar with your strengths as a worker and as an individual. Remember the first activity we did? In that activity, we discussed personal strengths; now let's talk about things you could do well as an employee. Identifying these work skills can help you prepare well for a job interview.

DO:

- Have participants take a few minutes to complete the worksheet *As an Employee, What Do You Have to Offer?* (Handout G). Using the worksheet, practice in small groups, describing your strengths and abilities out loud to one another.

REFLECT:

After allowing time for discussion, you may want to discuss the following questions. (Questions should be written on chart paper.)

- Was it hard to describe your strengths and abilities?
- What things do you do well?
- What are the personality traits you like about yourself?
- Why would you be the right person for a particular job?

Handout G: As an Employee, What Do You Have to Offer?

Answer the following questions honestly. Place an "X" in the correct blank.

Yes — No

____ ____ 1. Are you willing to learn new skills and new ways of doing things?

____ ____ 2. Are your work habits and personal appearance neat?

____ ____ 3. Are you punctual?

____ ____ 4. Can you do a job without being easily bored or distracted?

____ ____ 5. Can you work under pressure without becoming overly nervous and upset?

____ ____ 6. Can you adapt to new and unexpected situations easily?

____ ____ 7. Are you aware of your strengths and weaknesses?

____ ____ 8. Are you capable of taking things in stride?

____ ____ 9. Can you work on your own?

____ ____ 10. Do you have a sense of duty and responsibility?

____ ____ 11. Are your job plans realistic?

____ ____ 12. Are you reliable? Can you be depended on to do a good job?

____ ____ 13. Can you gain the friendship and respect of co-workers?

____ ____ 14. Can you cooperate with co-workers and supervisors/managers?

____ ____ 15. Can you follow directions and ask questions when necessary?

____ ____ 16. Can you understand instructions and carry them out accurately or ask questions when instructions are unclear?

____ ____ 17. Can you accept criticism without feeling hurt?

____ ____ 18. Can you work without constant supervision?

____ ____ 19. Can and do you complete a job once you start it?

____ ____ 20. Are you friendly and congenial and do you really like people?

Part 7: The Job Interview: Lesson Plan

Activity 1

Distribute Handout H. Most employers ask the same types of questions during job interviews. It's important to practice answering these types of questions so that you will know the best answers. This handout, *Interview Questions You Might Be Asked*, includes commonly asked questions during job interviews.

DO:

- Take a few minutes to let the participants think about their answers.
- Allow participants to complete the worksheet.
- Divide the group into pairs. Have them alternate being the employer and the potential employee and ask each other the questions.

REFLECT:

- Talk about the answers given.
- Would you hire this person? Why? Why not?

APPLY:

- Can you improve your answers?

Activity 2

Generally, the job interview gets you the job. The presentation on paper is important but the final decision isn't made until after the interview. You are there to present yourself but also to learn about the job. For each interview you go on, prepare at least three or four questions to ask during the interview.

DO:

- What are some questions you can ask? Use chart paper to record the answers.
- Have the group evaluate the appropriateness of the questions. Show transparencies created from Handouts I, *Questions You Can Ask at a Job Interview*, and J, *Questions Not to Ask at a Job Interview*, and distribute the handouts. Compare their answers with those included on the transparencies and handouts.

REFLECT:

- Have you ever used these questions in interviews before? What were the responses?
- Are there other questions you have asked in the interview? Are they on the "Do Ask" or "Don't Ask List"?

APPLY:

- Make a set of questions you will use in the interview.

DO:

- Role play the job interview.
  - Ask for two volunteers to role play a job interview for a companion/sitter. Use one of the jobs from the "Want Ads" or one from a local agency. Give other participants the "Job Interview Evaluation Score Sheet" to score the role playing.

REFLECT:

- Would you hire the person?
- What was the score given on the interview evaluation?
- How could the potential employee have presented himself/herself better?

APPLY:

- Have all participants do a role play of an interview and evaluate Using Handout K, *Job Interview Evaluation Score Sheet*.

Handout H: Interview Questions You Might Be Asked

1. Why are you here?

_____

2. What training have you received to do this job?

_____

3. Why do you want to work here?

_____

4. What kind of work are you looking for?

_____

5. Do you know anyone who works here?

_____

6. Do you like to work with others or by yourself?

_____

7. What would you do if you did not agree with instructions you were given?

_____

8. What interests you about working with the elderly?

_____

9. What do you know about the job that is available?

_____

Handout I: Question You Can Ask at a Job Interview

- What are the duties and responsibilities of the job?
- Who is the supervisor?
- What type of training will be provided?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?

Handout J: Questions Not to Ask at a Job Interview

- When will I get my first raise?
- Will I get a vacation?
- Will I have to work holidays?
- How often may I be late for work?
- How many sick days do I get each month?

Handout K: Job Interview Evaluation Score Sheet

JOB INTERVIEW EVALUATION SCORE SHEET

Score points on a scale from 5 to 1 as follows:

5=Excellent, 4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor

Name_____

Points

Earned — Possible

_____ _____ Clear, up-to-date application or resume

_____ _____ Knew how his/her qualifications could fit the job

_____ _____ Good listening skills

_____ _____ Provided the kind of information that would help an interviewer make a decision about whether to hire

_____ _____ Alert and responsive

_____ _____ Ability to relate to others

_____ _____ Exercised good judgment

_____ _____ Appearance

_____ _____ Confident and interested in employment

_____ _____ **Total:**

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 8: The Importance of a Contract After You Are Hired: Lesson Plan

Introduction

After you are hired, it is advisable to draw up a contract that will be appropriate for the work you are hired to do. This contract will protect you and your client (employer) if any misunderstandings arise during the course of your employment. The following sample contract is provided for your use.

DO:

- Distribute Handout K, *Sample Contract for the Elder Companion*. Discuss the contract with the participants to make sure that they understand the importance of having one in place.

REFLECT:

- Why is a contract between you and your employer important?
- Can you think of anything that you would add to or delete from the contract?

APPLY:

- Have someone from a local employment agency relate some of the things that could result if there isn't a contract in place.

Handout L: Sample Contract for the Elder Companion

Elder Companion's Name:

_____Phone_____

Address

_____

Name of Client:

_____

Employer can be reached at: _____

Phone_____

Police Department number:

_____

Fire Department number:

_____

Nearest neighbor name:

_____Phone: _____

Client's Doctor: _____

Phone:_____

Ambulance number:

_____

Job Responsibilities: (Check)

_____ House Cleaning

_____ Leisure Activities

_____ Basic nutrition, meal preparation

_____ Sanitation of home (as related to client only/client's room)

Special instructions and/or duties:

_____

List any disabilities, allergies, etc. I should know about:

_____

In return for my services, I understand that my salary will be $ _____ per hour or $ _____ per day, payable at the end of each week.

Days and Hours Agreed for Work

Monday _____ to _____

Tuesday _____ to _____

Wednesday _____ to _____

Thursday _____ to ____

Friday _____ to _____

Saturday _____ to _____

Sunday _____ to _____

If for any reason my services are no longer needed, I expect to be given a minimum of one week's notice by my employer.

_____

Elder Companion

_____

Employer

_____

Date

_____

Date

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Acknowledgment

Original article written by Elizabeth B. Bolton, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Handout E/Table 1. Education Information for Resume.

School	City	Date of graduation

Handout E/Table 2. Job-Related Experience List for Resume.

Date	Company/Activity	Position/Role

Handout E/Table 3. Potential References List.

Name	Address	Telephone #

[1] This document is FCS5255, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences. Original publication date September 1999. Revised January 2004, May 2015, and July 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the currently supported version of this publication.

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